

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9239

C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 2709

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT

SUBJECT: MEETING WITH COPEI PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE LORENZO
FERNANDEZ

1. IN CONTINUATION OF MY PERIODIC MEETINGS WITH THE CANDIDATES OF THE TWO MAJOR PARTIES, I HAD TO LUNCH TODAY LORENZO FERNANDEZ, COPEI CANDIDATE, WITH HIS CHIEF ADVISERS. DESPITE OCCASIONAL REPORTS THAT GERNANDEZ IS DISTRESSED BY CERTAIN SLIGHTS HE FEELS HE HAS RECEIVED IN THE PAST FROM THIS EMBASSY AND WASHINGTON, THE ATMOSPHERE WAS NOTHING BUT FRIENDLINESS AND LIGHT, AND THERE WAS NO REFERENCE TO ANY PROBLEMS THAT MIGHT EXIST BETWEEN THE COPEI GOVERNMENT AND THE UNITED STATES. THE COPEI DESIRE TO BE FRIENDLY AND THEIR INTEREST IN THIS LUNCH WAS PUNCTUATED LAST NIGHT WHEN LUIS ALBERTO MACHADO, SECRETARY GENERAL TO THE PRESIDENT, CALLED ME ASIDE TO STATE HIS PERSONAL (AND PRESUMABLY PRESIDENTIAL) PLEASURE AT MY INVITATION TO LORENZO TO LUNCH WITH ME.

2. ALTHOUGH NOTHING OF REAL SUBSTANCE AROSE DURING THE LUNCH, FERNANDEZ REPEATED HIS BELIEF THAT ON PETROLEUM THE US GOVERNMENT AND HIS GOVERNMENT COULD REACH SOME AGREEMENT. HE SAID THAT THE BASIC PRINCIPLES THAT WOULD GOVERN ANY DECISION HE TAKES AS PRESIDENT OF VENEZUELA WILL BE BASED ON A DIALOGUE AND FRANK EXCHANGE WITH ALL INTERESTED SECTORS ON THE VENEZUELAN SIDE AS WELL AS THE US SIDE. HE MADE REFERENCE AGAIN TO HIS DESIRE TO " MOVE UP REVERSION FROM 1983." HOWEVER, NEITHER HE NOR HIS ADVISERS WOULD BE MORE SPECIFIC
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AS TO HOW THIS MIGHT TAKE PLACE.

3. ALSO PRESENT WAS ACTING COPEI PARTY PRESIDENT GODOFREDO GONZALEZ WHO IS ONE OF LORENZO' S CHIEF ADVISERS ON PETROLEUM. GONZALEZ WARMLY AGREED TO MEET AT A LATER DATE WITH ME AND PETROLEUM ATTACHE OGG TO GO OVER SOME OF THE GENERAL GROUND ON THE FUTURE OF OUR PETROLEUM RELATIONS WITH VENEZUELA. I TOOK THE OCCASION TO EXPLAIN TO BOTH FERNANDEZ AND GONZALEZ THAT JULIO SOSA RODRIGUEZ HAD BEEN DESIGNATED BY THE VENEZUELAN GOVERNMENT TO CONDUCT THE TALKS WITH REGARD TO THESE FUTURE RELATIONS.

4. IN ADDITION TO FERNANDEZ AND GONZALEZ, ALSO PRESENT WERE COPEI SECRETARY GENERAL PEDRO PABLO AGUILR WHO WHILE OCCASIONALLY DEMONSTRATING SOME PUBLIC RANCOR TOWARD THE UNITED STATES WAS EXCEEDINGLY FRIENDLY AND WENT OUT OF HIS WAY TO EXPRESS HIS BELIEF THAT THERE EXISTED NO SERIOUS PROBLEMS BETWEEN OUR TWO COUNTRIES; AND COPEI UNDER SECRETARY GENERAL EDUARDO FERNANDEZ AND THE CAMPAIGN COORDINATOR OSWALDO ALVAREZ PAZ, WHO ARE THE YOUNGEST AND BRIGHTEST OF LORENZO' S TEAM.

5. IN SUM, I FOUND THIS LUNCH A DIPLOMATIC SUCCESS AND ONE WHICH MAY HAVE SMOOTHED SOME RUFFLED FEATHERS OF THE BIG COPEI BIRD. AS A MATTER OF FACT, LORENZO' S FEATHERS SEEMED IN GOOD ALIGNMENT. HE PHYSICALLY LOOKS MUCH BETTER THAT WHEN I SAW HIM SIX MONTHS AGO; HE HAS STOPPED DRINKING (AT LEAST AT THE AMERICAN EMBASSY) , IS BRONZED AND HAS LOST THE NOTABLE TREMOR IN HIS RIGHT HAND. ON THE WHOLE, HE AND HIS COLLABORATORS EXUDED A SPIRIT OF CONFIDENCE WHICH COULD ONLY HAVE BEEN EQUALED BY HIS MAIN OPPONENT, CARLOS ANDRES PEREZ, AND HIS COLLABORATORS WHEN THEY LUNCHEDED WITH ME ON MARCH 7. MY OVER- ALL IMPRESSION IS THEREFORE THAT AT THIS PREMATURE DATE THIS EMBASSY IS ON VERY GOOD TERMS WITH THE PRINCIPAL CANDIDATES; ALTHOUGH IN ABSENCE OF KNOWLEDGE FROM THE DEPARTMENT AS TO AGUILAR' S REPRESENTATION MARCH 24 I CAN ONLY GUESS AS TO POSSIBLY WASPISH ATTITUDES ON THE PART OF COPEI GOVERNMENT.

MCCLINTOCK

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